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IMPLICATIONS OF POST-INDEPENDENCE  
CHANGE IN RURAL INDIA:  
A Case Study from Uparhar Area

H. S. VERMA

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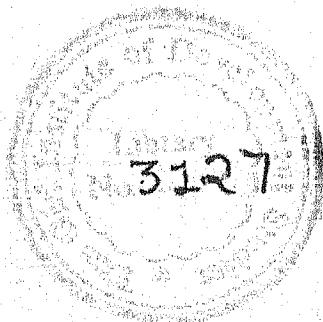
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December 1979

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Nature and Development Implications of Post-Independence Change in Rural India : A Case Study from Uparhar Area \*

H.S. VERMA

Programmes of directed social change have been in operation since India became independent on August 15, 1947. Village social systems have registered changes as a result of their operation as well as working of the process of spontaneous change. The phenomenon of social change in rural India itself had been an area of research interest for an impressive number of social scientists. Their studies, however, suffered from a number of errors of commission and omission. <sup>1/</sup> In generalized terms one noted that there was not even a single study which analysed social change for the entire post-independence period in a chronological and sequential manner. Such a study was needed to indicate the direction, quantum and adequacy of change which has occurred in the Indian villages. In an era when stock-taking was being done and programme formulation was being critically examined, the study might have provided vital policy options. An ideal solution would have been to undertake a study which was devoid of past inadequacies and broke new conceptual, and empirical grounds. Much as it was desired to do so, resource constraints forced us to undertake an exploratory exercise first. If the results so warranted, a comprehensive study would follow thereafter.

Objectives and Coverage

Limited considerably in scope, this study, therefore, intended to analyse the working of the corporate entity of the village as a social system and the changes which have been operative in the post-independence period due to the combined forces of directed and spontaneous social change. The aspects covered were :

\* This piece draws its entire material from author's study, Post-Independence Change in Rural India : A Review and a Case Study from Uparhar Area of Uttar Pradesh, (Lucknow, Giri Institute of Development Studies, 1979) conducted with the financial support of the Indian Council of Social Sciences Research.

1. Nature and working of collective authority of the village.
2. Cohesion, conflict, crime and violence.
3. Development and deployment of system resources.
4. Nature of change in the production system.
5. Changes in the social structure.

In the analysis which follows, the emphasis is on discovering the nature of change, processes and motivators of change and the consequences which flow therefrom.

#### Methodology

This is a historical study of one structurally complex village, Rasoolpur, located near the tehsil headquarters of Fatehpur in Barabanki district. Locationally, the village is in the Uparhar area, to the north of which lies the flood-ravaged Gaanjar region. The bench-mark of each of the aspects covered is August 1947. Changes recorded during the last 32 years have been reconstructed with the help of indepth discussions with a large number of village inhabitants, drawn from different strata of its social structure. Data collection has been made with the help of some unconventional techniques, including investigative reporting and teasing and ferreting out of information from inter-connected sources. 2/ Use of these techniques was possible because of the long standing contacts of the author with the sample village extending over a quarter century. Official data has not been entirely relied upon as its closer scrutiny indicated quite often its bogus nature.

Timing of events has been decided with the help of landmark events in each case and has been checked and crosschecked several times. The accuracy of field data, therefore, is likely to be greater than the officially compiled data, usually filed by dim-witted, unmotivated and ill-equipped government servants.

Change has been analysed only at the level of total village and not at family or individual levels. It is not our contention that the last two are inconsequential. However, with the limited resources at our disposal, it was not possible to extend the coverage.

By its very nature, the study has been prosecuted to dig up issues and questions on which detailed study(ies) might throw more satisfactory light. Consequently, the findings of the empirical part have been used to pose issues and questions which have profound policy implications for the development of Indian villages.

## I

### Rasoolpur : Elementary Specifics

Rasoolpur is located roughly two kilometers away on the south-west side of Fatehpur, the tehsil headquarters in Barabanki district. It formed part of the estate of a Fatehpur Muslim Zamindar in the pre-Zamindari Abolition Act days.

There were 59 households distributed into 12 Hindu and 3 Muslim castes in 1947. Number of households has subsequently been increasing to touch the figure of 145 in 1977 and 158 in 1979 (Table 1). Interestingly enough the number of castes in its social structure had come down to 12 in 1961, and 11 in 1971. The increase in the number of households is more marked among the Hindus than the Muslims. Among the Hindus, the largest block of increased households is accounted for by the Chamars. This growth is overwhelmingly due to distress immigration from a few villages located across the river Chauka, a tributary of the legendary Ghaghara in the Gaanjar region.

Farming was, and continues to be, the main occupation for a majority of the households. The Muslim Bhujwas were generally residents of Rasoolpur but their occupation was trading of farm produce in the neighbouring villages. They still practice the same occupation although their modes operandi has undergone some changes.

Rasoolpur itself is located in the Uparhar region but interacts very actively with the Gaanjar region on the one hand and the urban system of Lucknow on the other. This interaction was clearly demarcated in 1947 with the Chamars almost entirely accounting for the exchanges with the Gaanjar region and the Bhujwas, Kurmis, Ahirs, and Brahmins interacting with the urban growth and flow impulses

Table : 1

Number of Households in Rasoolpur at Different Points of Time

Households of Different Castes	Number in				
	1947	1951	1961	1971	1979
<u>Hindus</u>					
1. Brahmin	3	3	3	3	3
2. Kurmi	15	19	21	38	41
3. Ahir	1	2	3	3	3
4. Sonar	1	1	1	-	-
5. Barhai	1	1	1	1	1
6. Baksor	1	1	2	2	2
7. Pasi	6	8	11	15	15
8. Chamar	7	15	28	41	45
9. Teli	1	1	1	-	-
10. Tamoli	1	1	-	-	-
11. Kahar	1	1	-	-	-
12. Lodh	1	1	1	1	1
Sub-Total	39	54	72	104	111
<u>Muslims</u>					
1. Bhujwa	17	21	29	36	42
2. Nai	2	2	3	4	4
3. Teli	1	1	1	1	1
Sub-Total	20	24	33	41	47
Total Households	59	78	105	145	158
Population	272	301	439	669	721
Percentage Change (with the previous point of time)	-	32.0	34.6	38.0	8.9
Percentage Change (with the benchmark base of 1947)	-	32.0	77.9	145.7	167.7

of Lucknow. Beginning in 1955 this trend has also undergone marked change. The interaction of the Chamars with their former native places remains but it has obviously weakened because of development of their marital ties in the Uparhar region itself. Also some among them came under the spell of a Harijan political activist operating in the garb of a Baba and this opened up their mental horizons and made their inter-action with the outer world possible.

## II

### Collective Authority Structure of the Village

In 1947 the collective authority structure of the village consisted of (a) the Mukhia, a hand-picked head of the village by the Zamindar, (b) an informal group of influential heads of households, and (c) the Chowkidar, a part-time employee of the Police department. The British had delegated the power to govern the villages to the Zamindars, who, in turn, operated via the Mukhia. As a result, a large number of individual disputes, civil and criminal, were being settled at the village level itself by the collective authority structure. This institution was supposed to operate objectively and for the common good of the entire village under both normal and extra-ordinary conditions. There were hardly any alternative levers of power which could dilute the enforcement of its will. The authority was consequently obeyed and held in awe and respect. Because of this the local population hesitated to commit deviant acts which would invite its intervention. Thus, the commission of deviant acts was kept in check.

The passage of U.P. Zamindari Abolition Act in 1948 knocked out the very legitimacy of the Zamindari system and the primacy, legal power and derivative base of the office of Mukhia. The opening of several new government departments sent a flock of new government officials increasing the penetration of Rasoolpur's social structure about the same time. Local disputes started being settled in outside courts. A somewhat modified version of the old village Panchayat system was reintroduced through the U.P. Panchayat Raj Act in 1949. This system formalized the informal collective authority structure and provided it a statutory base.

The first of the two terms (1949-1954) held by Balla Pandit as the Pradhan of Rasoolpur Panchayat and the Sarpanch of the Nyaya Panchyat was marked for its assertion of authority in settling village disputes. The severity of fines imposed and arbitrariness of some of his decisions, however, came to be resented. Some people, on legal advice, refused to carry their cases to the village and Nyaya Panchayats and preferred the courts in the latter part of his first term. Balla Pandit's second term (1954-1959) was ineffective and several of his decisions were openly flouted. During the same period the influence of outside 'brokers' in "fixing" cases and issues through display of muscle-power, treachery, and sheer chicanery assumed prominence.

Subsequently, between 1959-1979, the Pradhan's chair has been tenanted by members of Kurmi family of Chandrabhal. Clever as they were, they did not take up the judicial role from the very beginning and concentrated on obtaining as much benefits from this office as the opportunities permitted. Between 1968-1979, a new phenomenon of cluster-based power brokers has appeared and these brokers make their services available, for explicitly defined quid pro quo, to anyone who is willing to play their game.

### III

#### Cohesion, Conflict, Crime and Violence

Before 1953 the notion of ritual pollution had not created bad blood between different castes belonging to Hindu and Muslim religions. A notable part was played by the numerically preponderant Muslim Bhujwa community in creating communal amity and goodwill in Rasoolpur.

This state of peaceful co-existence was, however, terminated in 1953 in so far as the Chamars were concerned. A Chamar political activist appeared on the scene and knitted the caste into a militant oppressed group. As a result, the Chamars left their traditional Jajmani duties and took to teetotalling, vegetarian habits. It was with their help that the Pradhans from Chandrabhal family won on successive occasions. In this conflict of interests, the Chamars, because of lack of resource base, could subdue only the Brahmin but not the Kurmis and Bhujwas.

In 1947 cohesion in Rasoolpur social structure was reflected in the use of non-Jajmani and non-wage help for economic, social and cultural activities. In farming this cohesion was evident in the Jitta system (under which the farmers assisted each other), the common Kolhu, the shared use of bullock-cart(s) and even pairs of bullocks. However, between 1952-1969 the Jitta system disappeared; the cooperative Kolhu was stopped around 1971-72 and after 1973 the sharing of bullocks and cart got considerably reduced.

In social ceremonies such as marriage, the expenses of the concerned individuals were minimized with the help of contributions coming from the village community in various forms. These have got reduced, in stages, during the last 32 years. The cultural ceremonies such as the Kandhayya Dol, Holi, and Bhagwat Katha were events where the total Rasoolpur community, including the Muslims, participated sharing the expenses according to their capacities to pay. Of these, the Dol stopped after the death of Sarjoo Sonar in 1959; the community character of Holi came to an end around 1963 when the majority of families objected to the vulgarisation of Holiyayeeing (i.e. ceremonial ragging); and after 1964 the Bhagwat Katha became an event organised by individuals. Conflict between individuals, which was caused by disputes over Zar (money), Zoru (woman) and Zamin (land), also increased with the inclusion in this list of jealousy. Between the castes, there have been fights between Chamars and Brahmins in 1963, 1968 and 1972.

Deviance in behaviour of Rasoolpur population was observed in respect of (a) social norms, (b) sexual relations, (c) person, (d) property and (e) economic activities. The observance of birth to death rituals among the Hindus is no longer what it was practiced in 1947. Of all the ceremonies, only the Panigrahan (marriage), Daswan, Terhi and Tarpan (death, thirteenth day rites and offering of Pindas) are now performed. The observance of rituals and rites among the Muslims of Rasoolpur has, however, not changed as much as those among Hindus. Of course, not many among the Muslims offer Namaj five times a day and the celebration of 'optional' events (i.e. Milad and Dahe, etc.) has declined.

Sexual 'deviations' in 1947 displayed the following pattern : (a) a larger number of out of wed-lock sexual relationships had females belonging to the ritually lower castes; (b) more of adults than adolescents were involved in them; (c) there were a few 'regular' and widely known relationships; (d) intra-caste cases constituted quite a large percentage; and (e) quite a few cases of incest existed. Between 1953-1979 these patterns have been transformed to : (a) somewhat normalized distribution of out of wed-lock sexual relationships among different age groups; (b) very widespread presence among all caste groups; (c) increase in the number of 'regular' relationships; (d) greater tolerance of open and long-lasting sexual deviations of 'revolting' nature; and (e) participation of outsiders in sexual sessions with some extraordinarily beautiful women of Rasoolpur.

Crimes against the person and property have been on the increase in Rasoolpur. A total of three murders and 132 thefts, minor and major, were committed during the post-independence period. Since the sense of insecurity, of both person and property, has greatly increased due to increased incidence of such crimes, aided and abetted by the thieves/dacoit - politician - police combine, some counter-measures have been taken by the Rasoolpur population. These include : (a) guarding of harvested produce in the Khaliyaan and tethering of cattles in closed sheds; (b) sleeping indoors; (c) discontinuance of the practice of keeping semi-permanent assets in the fields; and (d) purchase of licensed guns and keeping of unlicensed Kattas by about 90 per cent population.

#### IV

##### Development and Deployment of System Resources

The population of Rasoolpur has been increasing during the last 32 years.: what has not changed significantly is the structure and content of the social capital. No new occupational skills have been added to the number that already existed in Rasoolpur. On the other hand, with the death of the Sonar, the Teli and Tamoli, the skills associated with these occupations have ceased to be available in Rasoolpur.

Farming and trading in food-grains are the two major occupations in which over 80 per cent of Rasoolpur population is engaged. The first of these would be separately discussed. Trading in food-grains has been the mainstay of Bhujwa lives. They did not require much liquid working capital to carry on their business : only they had to maintain a horse between a pair of them. Payment to the producer was made after the purchased grain had been marketed in Fatehpur town. Trading in grains remains very much the same proposition even now excepting for the emergence of some unscrupulous elements among Bhujwas. Consequently, such traders are now required to make hundred percent down payment to the producer at the time of weighing itself. Between 1964-1971 some of the Bhujwas started carrying grains, in trucks, to Lucknow and Kanpur Mandis but intermittent changes in the food grain trade rules in U.P. forced them to fall back on their age-old Fatehpur base. Until 1959, the Bhujwas also used to purchase Gur and market it in Barabanki and Lucknow. The inroads made in this segment by the Kurmis on the one hand and decline in Gur-making on the other forced them to drop this item altogether after 1962-1963. The only notable event in their trading operations after 1974 has been the establishment of a rice-husking mill by M/s. Mata Prasad Bhuramal, the Agrawal trading family of Fatehpur. Four of Rasoolpur Bhujwas now act as some kind of purchasing agents of paddy for this rice mill. The arrangement suits them although the unit margins are decidedly low. They, however, make it up via huge turnover and free availability of Bhoosi (i.e. skin of paddy) from the rice mill which their horses consume with relish.

Education, as a medium of occupational mobility, has so far benefitted only a Brahmin and four Kurmi families. The three Brahmins from Balla Pandit's family are respectively working in Police (Head Constable), Revenue (Lekhpal) and Medical (Ayurvedic Physician) departments. The four white-collar employees from Kurmi families are Primary School Teachers, Lekhpal and Post and Telegraph Inspector.

The animal wealth of Rasoolpur was of low quality and consisted of goats, pigs, and cows in addition to the bullocks and buffaloes. The distribution of goats, pigs and cows was somewhat caste-specific : the goats were mainly with the Bhujwas, the pigs with the Pasis and the cows with the Ahirs. Only bullocks and buffaloes were

common to most farmers belonging to various castes. Shrinkage of pasture land, and area under sugar-cane has decreased availability of green fodder. Animal population of Rasoolpur has consequently come down between 1967-1970. Another noticeable feature is decreasing use of animal energy in farming and allied occupations. Quite a few operations which were previously being done with the use of animal power are now accomplished mechanically. All these developments have escalated the cost of production of goods and services.

Physical and economic resources consisted of land, houses, roads, irrigation and drinking water, and orchards. Rasoolpur has yellowish alluvial soil which is fertile. The terrain is flat and rainfall quite satisfactory. Roads and bullock-cart tracks, if properly developed and maintained, would have made Rasoolpur a very well connected village with the surrounding region. However, the successive Panchayat Pradhans did not take any initiative in this respect. Between 1947-1979 the width of many of the lanes has been drastically reduced by the never-ending encroachment of the settled population. Circulatory problems have consequently cropped up.

Drinking water was not available to the Chamar and Pasi families in 1947. Construction of two wells between 1952-62 with the help of government grants has, however, eased their problem. During the same period, most well-to-do families have installed hand-pumps. Existing wells are now used for bathing, washing and watering the cattle-feeding stalls.

Rasoolpur used to be surrounded from all sides by very dense mango orchards of Tukmi variety. They have been denuded in the post-independence period. But before the consolidation of holdings started in 1965, most people having fertile Goend (near to the village) land planted mango orchards of the Kalmi variety. Between 1965-79 these have become fully grown. The mango crop of most of these orchards is, however, sold outright to the fruit-venders of Fatehpur. In spite of development of these Kalmi orchards the fact remains that present area is not even one fourth of the area which used to be under Tukmi mango orchards earlier on.

### Production System

Apart from trading in grains, farming constitutes the only other major production system which sustains the economy of Rasoolpur. Structural changes of far reaching consequences have taken place in Rasoolpur farming. Instead of detailed cataloguing of these, we would highlight only major patterns.

Farming in Rasoolpur conformed to what Swaminathan (1978) calls 'our agriculture' in which there was a working equilibrium of human skills with the ecological system. The seeds were locally produced and remained available with every individual farmer. They were not prone to diseases and were not required to be replaced every third-fourth year. The output from the farms was absorbed on the farm, or in domestic uses for the human beings and animals. The instruments needed for agricultural operations were locally made and serviced by the local artisans. Animal and human energy was used in maximum number of activities. Farming as a technical sequence of operations is quite a complicated occupation and over the years the Rasoolpur population, especially the Kurmis, had developed a wide repertoire of indigenous knowledge and skills in carrying out farming. This knowledge and skill enabled the farmers as individual decision-makers to respond to the needs of three sub-systems : (a) their family, (b) their farm, and (c) the Rasoolpur and outside world. Farming, conducted as a single family enterprise, was, in its operational form, a cooperative and joint enterprise in which one farmer assisted a number of others. Those not owning land but working as wage-labour developed special relationships with some families on whose farms they normally worked. Farming was, thus, a way of life in which various segments of Rasoolpur society were integrated without any formalised order to that effect.

### Post-Independence Changes in Farming

Farming has changed as a result of programmes initiated under the Grow More Food Campaign, Community Development Programme, and High Yielding Varieties Programme, respectively and approximately reaching Rasoolpur community

in the fifties, sixties, and seventies. The extension officials have admittedly played useful role in the transmission of new ideas and technology initially but the response behaviour has been more influenced by the self-obtained knowledge, observation and experience of the Rasoolpur farmers. Instead of assigning dumb labels to the changes which have been witnessed in Rasoolpur farming, we would rather describe them in specific terms.

#### Relative Freedom to Dependency

In the use of seeds, Rasoolpur farmers have obviously increased the number of their options. Among the principal crops, wheat and paddy, some traditional varieties known for their nice smell, good taste, and disease-free existence have been retained along with the adoption of newer varieties developed at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute and Pantnagar Agricultural University. 3/ The usage of agricultural implements follows the same pattern where the improved and traditional plough co-exist. Pumpset is one single item which has been acquired by over 70 per cent farming families. In contrast, only three tractors have been purchased. After 1969 threshers have got a wider acceptance. There are as many as 12 threshers with Rasoolpur farmers now. The use of bullock-cart has declined appreciably. Their number has, consequently, come down to 10 in 1979 from 24 in 1947. Even those who have it, use them very nominally. The use of animal power too has declined although their number has come down appreciably only in case of the tractor owners. Even with the latter, the two act as complementary (and not alternative) sources of energy use. Directionally, all these changes have increased dependency of Rasoolpur farmer on the outside environment.

#### Suction of Local Economy in the Wider Environment

Farming in Rasoolpur is no longer concerned only with its own economy : during the last 32 years it has got dovetailed in stages, first with the sub-regional, then with the regional and finally, with the national economy. The national economy, in turn, is integrated with the global economy. This has transformed the basic character of Rasoolpur agriculture and increased its dependence on the industrial sector much to its disadvantage. For both its input purchase and output disposal, it is dependent

on outsiders. This dependence has increased with the passage of time as larger number of commercial crops have become popular and agriculture has changed its subsistence character. The Rasoolpur farmer has now to purchase the seed, fertilizer, pesticides and diesel at prices controlled by outsiders. These prices change, not by marginal 5-10 per cent but by margins as high as 50-60, 70-80, 100-150 per cent. On the other hand, the prices of agricultural outputs, determined by the Agricultural Prices Commission, are not given to the farming community because of structural characteristics of the marketing system. There exists an organized network of exploitors in the marketing of wheat, potato, sugar-cane, and paddy, the principal crops grown in Rasoolpur. The Rasoolpur farmer is helpless in avoiding the tentacles of these elements.

#### Alternations in the Farming Structure

Another type of structural change observed in Rasoolpur's farming is the gradual alienation of land from the smaller farmers and its centralisation among the bigger families. In 1947, only Kirhi Ram possessed about 250 Kutcha Bighas of land (about 50 acres). Between 1953-1971 two other Kurmi families - Chandrabhal and Kripal - have increased their holding from a meagre 65 and 55 (13 and 11 acres) to 135 and 190 bighas (27 and 38 acres) respectively. Increased cost of inputs and low per unit net return has also forced around 75 per cent of Rasoolpur farmers to be in substantial debts. Until 1955 about 60 per cent farmers were making some net gains through their agriculture. Now farming has become a loosing profession for a domineering majority. Why are the farmers continuing in the same line if the profession is not a paying one ? The answer, in the words of Shivanandan, a young Rasoolpur farmer, is "Where else could we go? We have no other choice and we have no one to help us obtain an entry in any other profession. Given help and choice, we would be very glad to move out".

The portents for the future of farming as a profession do not appear too bright in Rasoolpur. This is because of two important developments. First, the younger generation of Rasoolpur farmers, born after 1955 or so and receiving schooling in a developing Fatehpur town and relatively exposed much more to the urban life, is not as much keen

in putting physical labour on the farms as the earlier generations. This set wants more of mechanical gadgets which are costly to purchase and operate and require outside help to maintain. Second, the change in the cropping pattern requires larger wage-labour on the farms. Wage-labour of Rasoolpur caters to both Rasoolpur and the neighbouring village, Palpatan. Also, the practice of going to work at 3 or 4 a.m. in the morning and working late in the nights, so unavoidable in agricultural operations, has almost ceased to exist. As a result, the costs have increased and agricultural operations have to be planned even more carefully. Some trade-offs have been, consequently, worked out which require usage of different strategies. Instead of customary Chaumasa ploughing, as was the case in 1947, now the plot is irrigated once, ploughed and, then, sown. This has saved labour input but increased costs of other inputs.

## VI

### Changes in the Social Structure

#### Changes in the Composition

The Rasoolpur social structure consisted of six hierarchies of different social positions in 1947. In a descending order these were : (1) big farmers; (2) traders; (3) middle farmers; (4) small farmers; (5) artisans and service class; and (6) landless and wage labour. During the last 32 years, this hierarchical structure has remained intact in so far as the number of hierarchies themselves are concerned (Table 2) : however, the composition of the social positions has undergone changes, both in absolute and proportional terms. Only the percentage of big farmers has remained almost constant: the numerical strength of all other hierarchies has altered. The percentages of middle and small farmers, artisans, and service class have declined somewhat more appreciably. The strength of traders too has come down. The landless and wage labour have, on the other hand, jumped from 19.7 per cent in 1947 to 36.9 per cent in 1979. Decline of artisans and service class coupled with increase of landless and wage labour indicated the operation of process of pauperization.

Table : 2

Changes in the Social Positions in Rasoolpur

Social Positions	Frequency and Percentages									
	1947		1951		1961		1971		1979	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1. Big Farmers	1	1.6	1	1.2	2	1.8	3	2.0	3	1.8
2. Traders	17	28.9	21	27.0	29	27.7	36	24.9	42	26.6
3. Middle Farmers	9	15.2	9	11.5	15	14.2	16	11.0	17	10.8
4. Small Farmers	12	20.4	13	16.6	22	20.9	30	20.8	29	18.3
5. Artisans and Service Class	9	15.2	10	12.9	10	9.6	9	6.2	9	5.6
6. Landless and Wage Labour	11	18.7	24	30.8	27	25.8	51	35.1	58	36.9
Total	59	100	78	100	105	100	145	100	158	100

Intra-caste Status Alternations

Status emulation and improvement has been considered to be a phenomenon which is operative inter-caste-wise (Srinivas : 1952, 1960, 1962, 1976). In Rasoolpur, however, intra-caste status alterations too have taken place which indicate presence of heterogeneity within the same castes. This tendency is particularly marked among the Kurmis and Chamaras. Most Kurmis of Rasoolpur belonged to the Annaikh 4/ variety in 1947 and, consequently, there was considerable difficulty for their sons to get married. There were hardly any Zimidars 5/ in Rasoolpur and the entire eastern block of Kurmi families (Chandrabhal, Kallu Ram, Kripal, etc.) were also Annaikhs and many eligibles among them were unmarried till 1952. Then after the first general election in 1952, Chandrabhal and Kripal families approached a poor Chowdhury among the

Gursel group of Zimidars.<sup>6/</sup> This Chowdhury had meagre financial base and was hard put to meet his both ends. He had, therefore, taken to the profitable mode of converting the Amnaikhs to the status of Zimidars. The process of legitimisation consisted of proving to others that the Rasoolpur families belonged to the lineage of Gursel Chowdhury families. By 1962 this process had been completed and the Rasoolpur families had graduated to the status of the Zimidars. The arrangement benefitted both the parties in the following ways : (a) the marriage of sons of Rasoolpur families was no longer a problem. In fact, they were getting sizeable dowry in the seventies. Their gain in ritual status had also brought economic gains; (b) the politician Chowdhury was very close to the district Congress boss, the late Mahant Jagannath Bukhs Das (of Kotwadham) who was also controlling the Barabanki Zilla Parishad. Through this conduit, a couple of Rasoolpur lads from neo-Zimidar families landed jobs of Primary School Teachers for themselves; and (c) their greater outside contacts enabled them to acquire lands of several Rasoolpur, Shaikhpur and Fatehpur parties and made it possible to open shops in Fatehpur and purchase land there; <sup>7/</sup> (d) the Gursel Chowdhuries had taken help of Rasoolpur families in the 1957, 1962, and 1967 elections. They also received help in the organisation of Gursel fair of which they were incharge. Later when one of the Chowdhuries opened a medical practitioner's shop in Fatehpur, the Rasoolpur crowd ensured supply of enough patients from their 'corridor'.

Among the Chamars, intra-caste status improvement had taken place on the strength of acquisition of economic resources. Badal and Kallu families had acquired, with the help of the political activist, an orchard and reasonable amount of land which made them more of self-sustaining. Later on when two among the latter family got employment in Railways, their condition improved further. Not much intra-caste ritual status difference existed among the Chamars in 1947. The improvement in the economic condition of the two Chamar families during the sixties added weightage to their ritual prestige in their caste Panchayat and now they act as some kind of 'superiors' among the Chamars.

### Decline of Ritual Supremacy

Rasoolpur social structure in 1947 had the Brahmins on the top and the Harijans at the bottom of the pyramidal ritual structure. Three factors have contributed to the decline of importance of ritual supremacy of the Brahmins. First, the capacity to enforce the penal provisions under the Hindu customs and practice is no longer operative. Second, several provisions of the Indian constitution and the one-man-one-vote electoral system conferred equal political weightage to the Harijan, and backward castes. Third and, more importantly, the economic status of the family enabled to tackle many of the attendant social problems.

The levers of whatever power, exercised at the village level, gravitated in the mid-fifties to the Kurmis in Rasoolpur. The Kurmis have exercised it in a totally different manner than the Brahmins. Here the exercise of power is based essentially in the economic activities. Of course, it is not as ruthless and coercive as was the case earlier on. And yet, to those who have to face its brunt it is unnerving even in its milder forms.

### Dwarfing of Rasoolpur Social Structure

Suction of Rasoolpur economy into the larger economic environment, and increased penetration of outside agencies and officials in to the affairs of Rasoolpur have dwarfed the social structure of the village to a great extent. This is reflected in the declining capacity of Rasoolpur community to decide its own issues and problems. In 1947 as and when a Rasoolpur resident faced the wrath of the village community, there was no way out left for him. He had to lie prostrate before the collective authority structure, take the punishment and get back acceptance. After 1963-64 this has changed. The intervention of outside elements bolsters the deviant behaviour in Rasoolpur now. Even in settling simple succession of land and property, the entire gamut of steps have to be settled outside Rasoolpur, in the courts and outside. To the extent the penetration of outside elements in the social structure of Rasoolpur has increased, the decisive character of its internal structure has shrunk.

## VII

Development Implications of Changes

The nature and direction of changes in Rasoolpur, their causative forces and, to some extent, their consequences were discussed in the preceding sections. We would now examine their development implications for the social structure of Rasoolpur and other similar villages in the Uparhar area. In particular, we would comment on: (a) the directional control of changes in the production system; (b) stagnation and immobility; (c) the trivial nature of available services; (d) increased exploitation via newer organisations; and (e) emergence of a dual society.

The Directional Control of Changes in the Production System

The type of changes which have occurred in the structure of farming in Rasoolpur have inevitably put a squeeze on the local farmer. He has been first induced to accept a technology which produced higher yields with relatively lower costs of inputs. As the time passed, traditional technology, knowledge and skills either got completely ignored or were used less frequently: newer technology gained larger acceptance disrupting the primacy of traditional institutions and relationships. 8/ The replacement technology increased his dependence on outsiders for both inputs procurement and outputs disposal and left almost no elbow-room for him to exercise many options. Thus, whereas he was forced to bear the entire range of risks and costs, the control of the marketing system by outside forces reduced his capacity to earn a remunerative price for himself. In the emergence of this schema in which the Rasoolpur farmer has been reduced to be a powerless spectator, the directional control of the structural changes in farming has become vested in the external forces and agencies. 9/ These agencies derive ideological initiative from international agencies, foreign governments and multi-nationals in designing and operating the agricultural/rural development programmes. As things stand, unless some counter-measures are taken the Rasoolpur farmer would be easy feed for the numerous vultures sitting in almost every agency having some say or the other in his affairs. The crucial issue then is: whether the Rasoolpur farmers should continue to be at the mercy of external forces? or should steps be taken to free them from the tentacles of the exploiting agents? 10/

### Stagnation and Immobility

During the last thirty two years, the Rasoolpur population has stagnated. Barring just a few, others are continuing in the same occupational rut. In the absence of new occupational skills and important contacts, entry into new professions/lines has not been possible. The two existing occupations in Rasoolpur, farming and trading, do not have infinite capacity to absorb ever increasing population without affecting their profitability. On their own, the Rasoolpur community is not in a position to start some major economic activity which would provide a break-through, trigger further development, and reduce increasing disparities. The approach of the development agencies so far has relied on 'percolation effect' which is offset by massive leakages operative at different levels. An important poser here is : Is it sufficient to keep on spending out skeleton outlays in all the areas? Is it not worthwhile to consider starting need-based economic activities with larger allocations and local participation which would benefit the local population in more appreciable manner?

### Trivial Nature of Social Services

In the colonial system of government which independent India inherited from the British - and the basic essentials of which remain intact even today - the question of settlement planning has been operationalized only in case of the urban areas.<sup>11/</sup> Perspective planning of bigger villages, which eventually become towns, has not been practiced. As such, villages grow but the social services, which are so essential to determine the quality of life in the villages as elsewhere, do not. In case of Rasoolpur, the village has only one school. For its all other needs it has to depend on public and private services available at Fatehpur at a price sometimes out of reach for a majority of Rasoolpur population.

Medical facilities, for example, are "available" at the Primary Health Centre (PHC) at Fatehpur. The PHC caters to a total population of over 200 villages with almost negligible medical supplies and thoroughly inadequate nursing and other staff. The Rasoolpur residents do not even go there : instead, they consult 3-4 qualified

doctors, an equal number of quacks, and get treated at considerably higher monetary, time, and other costs. In chronic cases, these Fatehpur practitioners send the patients to their favourite private practitioners in Lucknow. This story is repeated in case of all other services, including servicing of pumpsets and tractors. The important consideration is : whether the delivery of essential social (i.e. education, health, etc.) and other services should retain its colonial form? Should their location, composition, content, and character not be changed to bring them equitably to all sectors of the society?

#### Increased Exploitation via Newer Organisations

Government departments such as the Police, Revenue, and Irrigation had been known for their exploitation of the peasantry even in 1947. During the last 32 years a large number of new institutions have come into existence and it is their brutalized use by the officials, the wealthy traders, and the corrupt leadership for their partisan gains which has considerably increased the exploitation of the rural population. Among the institutions introduced in the post-independence period which affect the lives of Rasoolpur population in a significant manner are : the block, the Biswan Cooperative Cane Union, the Land Development Bank, the Cooperative Seed Store, the Commercial Banks, and Food Corporation of India, among others. Ironically enough, each of these institutions has been established with the stated objective of helping the rural population, including that of Rasoolpur. And yet, it is because of their existence that increased exploitation of Rasoolpur population has been taking place openly. The block has fostered the "subsidy culture" among the development bureaucracy. This culture is present in all other foregoing institutions. Under this "arrangement", the officials of concerned agencies take a "fixed" cut-back either from the beneficiary directly or via the supplier of the equipment/supplies. This has resulted in the escalation of the costs for the beneficiary, (who has to pay back the amount loaned to facilitate purchases) and denial of benefits to those not willing to play according to the 'rules' of this game. This is eating the vitals of developmental agencies. Quite a few organisations now show their increasing unwillingness to carry out such programmes which have

no subsidies. It is difficult to change this type of organisational culture of exploitation without altogether changing the organisational goals, values, structures and systems, as for instance, demonstrated by the Amul Milk model, on the one hand and conscientisation and mobilization of the beneficiaries on the other.

There is yet another problem created by newer institutions : quite few among them spend a major portion of total allocation on their establishments. 12/ Not enough money is left for the actual organisation of programme activities. To the extent the outside officials are assigned development duties and the residents of the concerned rural areas are not enabled to assume organisational responsibilities, such problems would continue to baulk the development efforts.

#### Emergence of a Dual Society

Dualism in Indian society practiced by the British during their rule was atleast not hypocritical : it was quite open and practiced with ruthlessness. After their departure their successors, of all hue and colour, have been publicly preaching socialism. And yet, within Indian society last 32 years have given birth to another type of dualist society. The first part of this society is constituted, at the local level of Fatehpur town and Rasoolpur village, by the Tehsildar, and the Station House Officer (Police), the Medical Officer Incharge of Primary Health Centre, the Manager of the State Bank of India (among the government agencies), the leading advocates, medical practitioners, the Principals of the local colleges, the managers of all other nationalized banks having branches in Fatehpur, the local M.L.A., the block Pramukh, the Fatehpur representative of Biswan Cooperative Cane Union, (among "public" figures) and leading traders of Fatehpur and important "leaders" from many villages. The mass of population constitutes the other half. In so far as the short, medium and long term needs of the first part are concerned, all the governmental, cooperative, and, private agencies, and individuals have to meet them on priority : there is just no question of non-availability of goods and services to this category. For, they are Rathadheesh (heads of institutions) and enjoy, in their own spheres of influence, almost absolute power. It does not pay to annoy them. Each of these men have, in a systematic way, consolidated this mercenary class by helping and obliging the other and also harassing such.

individuals and institutions who dared to challenge their "authority" and command.

While the goods and services are available to these privileged people at their will, the same are doled out to the masses at "a price". Extraction of this price from the victims has assumed specific forms in specific departments and institutions and the routes are clearly visible and known to any one who wants to see and enquire them. Over the years this practice has also become accepted by the suffering majority and thus, assumed attitudinal sanction. Thus, the system of organised corruption, bribery and fraud has become an accomplished art, one which is envy of the aspiring young men and topic of satisfied discussion among the elderly people of the deprived mass.

The younger generation of this class attends, in most cases, the best public schools at Lucknow - and not Fatehpur town -; their women-folk deck themselves with silks, jewellery and the costliest cosmetics; and invariably they end-up putting up palatial mansions in the posh localities of Lucknow or similar cities nearer their home towns/villages; they themselves succeed in depositing, under covered names, impressive sums in "fixed deposits", and investing in the blue chips on the stock markets; and, of course, their houses are stacked with such items as the car, refrigerator, the stereo system, the Television and stainless steel cutlery. At week-ends, these worthies visit nearest metropolitan towns with their friends and colleagues : there "other facilities" are made available to them by those who curry their favour.

This unabashed abuse of power, usurped from the people, has been going on. Not many among the existing political parties want to stop this pernicious division of society. In case of Fatehpur area, which has a creditable record of pre-independence struggles, this system has already been challenged twice during the last three years. The first was the struggle against the Principal of a local College in 1977-1978 and the second against the Tehsildar - Station House Officer and diesel dealers in September-November 1979. The first struggle was lost because of lack of organisational skills. The second, in which a few from Rasoolpur also participated, has just been won.

The important consideration, however, is : whether localized, single-issue struggles, which tend to divide the oppressed population, organised on a few occasions, would eliminate this system? Or an organisational framework of the exploited would have to be created on a permanent basis to take care of the problems? It would also be incumbent to consider whether the 1950 constitution has not been abused enough as to warrant its scrapping and replacement by one which is somewhat more practical and less bombastic.

#### Notes

1. An analytical review of these could be seen in Verma (1979).
2. A recent demonstration of usage of such techniques with commendable results could be seen in De Silva, et al (1979).
3. For example, the Rasoolpur farmers use Bisunparag, Baadshahpasand, Maaldahi, Laalmati, Kanakjir (traditional) and IR-8 and Jaya (HYV) varieties of paddy seeds. The traditional varieties of wheat in use are Samna, K-68 and the newer ones RR-21 and 1982.
4. The division of Kurmi caste into Amnaikhs and Zimidars was based on the notion of socalled extra purity (Kulinita) of the Zimidars. Among the Amnaikhs, there were two specific sub-types : (a) ones having the following "impurities"; (i) keeping of widowed woman as a wife; (ii) a concubine; (iii) unmarried motherhood; (iv) offering of girl, in marriage, at bridegroom's place; (v) a cross marriage (A and B marrying the sister of the other); and (vi) occupational work by the womenfolk; (b) the ones not having any impurities. Common feature of all Amnaikhs was that they did not belong to the privileged flock of Sarhe Baara villages of the Zimidar group. The Zimidar was supposed to be a descendent of the original Kurmi families of Sarhe Baara (12½) villages, falling in Barabanki-Sitapur districts. These villages were : Nammopur, Siyarpur, Khallapur, Ghoorepara, Manpur, Meeranagar, Taalgaon, Sarhemau, Gursel, Nanmau, Harakh, Barauli, and Danialpur. Within the Sarhe Baara group ranking existed

and dowry amount was positively and significantly related with the rank.

5. The term Zimidar should not be confused with the one called Zamindar. The latter referred to those owning land and property.
6. The Gursel group is among the first three in the Sarhe Baara hierarchy prevalent in the area.
7. In case of Kripal family, this change in their economic status was reflected in the colloquial names given to Kripal in different stages of their post-independence existence. First he was called Kripaluwa (1947-1952); then Kripal (1952-1962); afterwards Kripal Singh (1962-1972); and, finally, Kripal Singh Chowdhury (1972-1979).
8. For an interesting discussing on motives/consequences of replacement of traditional technology, reference might be made to Bell (1979), Howes (1979), and Swift (1979).
9. The narratives of Feder (1978 : 559-72) on the role of agri-business in Latin America and Johnson and Kilby (1975 : 34-75; 299-327) on agriculture and structural transformation in "late developing countries" indicate that this process is world-wide in its character and sweep of coverage.
10. The peasants around Fatehpur town, including those of Rasoolpur, seem to have already realized this. In September-November 1979, they carried out a fairly sustained localised struggle against the conniving officials of Revenue, Police and Civil Supplies Departments in denying them diesel and perpetrating atrocities. The successful conclusion of this struggle has made atleast one thing clear to them : organise and fight systematized exploitation by the trader-politician-official combine. Elsewhere too, as De Silve et al (1977, 1979) indicate, this has succeeded in giving back power to the people, power which has been usurped by the organised group of racketeers.

11 The forcible rearrangement of physical settlements of border nationalities (like the Nagas in Nagaland) by the Indian army under different Indian Prime Ministers has been an exception to this. However, the motive in going through these exercises has been to gain advantage from military point of view; it has certainly not been rural settlement planning.

12 For an excellent case study of expenditure patterns of development departments in a district of Gujarat, see, for example, Gaikwad and Parmar (1979).

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